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INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA  
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CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
CIA WASHDC  
CJTTF-HOA J2X CAMP LEMONIER DJ  
COMUSNAVCENT  
DIA WASHDC  
HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE  
JICCENT MACDILL AFB FL  
NSC WASHDC  
SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 000156

DEPARTMENT FOR DS/IP/AF, DS/TIA/ITA, DS/IP/SPC/SO, AF/E,  
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/14/2029

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [ER](#)

SUBJECT: INCREASED MILITARY ROUND-UPS AS INDEPENDENCE DAY  
APPROACHES

Classified By: CDA Melinda Tabler-Stone for Reason 1.4 (d)

11. (C) The Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) is conducting its usual military round-up of persons in Asmara as the May 24th Independence Day approaches. Thus far, the round-ups have consisted of plainclothes military and security officials at traffic circles during the daytime hours looking for potential saboteurs, suspicious persons, Eritreans who have not completed their compulsory military service, or military deserters. During the nighttime hours, uniformed soldiers flood the streets, positioning themselves on almost every street corner. Beginning May 11, the military has been openly deploying on street corners, stopping all males, and in some instances females. Patrons on buses, restaurants, and bars are also being searched and detained. RSO observed soldiers beating a detained man on May 14 and local guard force members (LGF) told RSO they observed soldiers chasing an Eritrean teenager who fled their checkpoint earlier this week near the embassy consular entrance. An LGF member was arrested on May 13 in a round-up, but was released 8 hours later after his family presented his demobilization card to GSE officials. Those rounded up are being taken to a military prison in Adi Abeito, which is located on the northern outskirts of Asmara.

NOTE: Military round-ups occur regularly in Eritrea, but are usually confined to a specific area. Usually only one soldier will be armed with an AK-47 (no additional magazines) and the rest will be armed with sticks. During the independence day period, the majority of the soldiers are armed and are wearing cartridge belts with additional magazines and grenades. END NOTE. Those rounded-up will be held until after the independence day period has passed.

12. (C) Security forces are also going house to house in Asmara and surrounding areas during the early morning hours, knocking on doors and kicking open those doors that residents don't open. The soldiers search all rooms, containers, under beds, and verify the existence and location of all family members by checking ration cards assigned to each family. One LGF had his door kicked open at 0600 hrs earlier this week. He showed his embassy badge to the soldiers and they left.

13. (C) Ethnic Ethiopians are being arrested en-masse and held at a military camp near the Asmara International Airport. Eritreans are being warned not to house ethnic Ethiopians who are hiding from the military. Shopkeepers and businesses are also being warned not to receive packages from anyone or store items for friends or associates.

¶4. (C) Comment: The military presence in Asmara will continue to intensify as the May 24th Independence Day approaches. Traditionally diplomats are not harassed or stopped in the military pedestrian or vehicular checkpoints. RSO has distributed a security notice to all Americans at Post advising them of the increased military presence, to carry their MFA cards, radios, cellphones, and to call Post 1 in the event of any incidents involving the military.

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